




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Jorge L. Morales, P.E., CFM, Director
Watershed Protection Department 

DATE: April 25, 2022

SUBJECT: Watershed Protection Department Response to Council Member Fuentes' Budget Rider #2, Community Engagement Specialist for Watershed Protection Department - Roles and Responsibilities

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a response to Council's adopted Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Rider #2 from Council Member Fuentes, directing the City Manager to use the proposed FY2022 Community Engagement position to support recommendations presented by the Flood Mitigation Task Force, in addition to assisting with the department's new strategic plan efforts. This position was filled as of February 27, 2022.

The Community Engagement Specialist position is responsible for enhancing the department's outreach and community engagement activities related to flood safety awareness and preparedness for communities located in flood-prone areas. This position will amplify efforts already underway to connect residents with information and resources needed to improve community resiliency through campaigns, partnerships, training, marketing and outreach materials and public engagement events. A detailed summary of these efforts can be found in the attached document.

In addition to responsibilities related to flood resiliency, the Community Engagement Specialist will assist with engagement activities to gain community involvement in the development of the department's strategic plan, *Rain to River*. Focus will be placed on racial equity while building relationships and engaging with organizations, leaders and residents in communities who are disproportionately impacted by flooding, erosion and pollution.

Please feel free to contact me at 512-974-3438 or by email at Jorge.Morales@austintexas.gov if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Attachment:

Community Engagement Resiliency Summary

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager
Juan Ortiz, Director, Homeland Security and Emergency Management

Community Resiliency Engagement Summary

Climate Navigator Training

The need to develop a training to bring awareness to emergency preparedness issues was identified through meetings with GAVA. The Climate Navigator training was developed with GAVA, HSEM and WPD to bring awareness to local hazards, resources, tools, and basic preparedness information. Some in-person trainings were delivered at the local library branch and then transitioned online (via Zoom) during the pandemic. Training has been provided in both English and Spanish. Forty Dove Springs residents have been trained to date.

Neighborhood Preparedness Guide

A neighborhood preparedness guide was developed by HSEM, WPD, GAVA, and the University of Texas. The guide focuses on local hazards and has information on preparedness for different types of emergencies, along with helpful tools and resources. The guide is available in English and Spanish. It will be distributed to the community in physical format and made available digitally. Moving forward, our goal is to modify this plan to be used city-wide in multiple languages for our limited English proficient communities.

Flood Safety Awareness Campaign

The goal of WPD's comprehensive Flood Safety Awareness Campaign is to communicate with the public about the dangers of flooding and steps that can be taken to protect lives and property. The campaign emphasizes that devastating floods can occur even during periods of drought, and that living in a floodplain can be a significant risk. It also encourages personal responsibility for one's own safety. This campaign occurs throughout the year and includes paid radio, digital and television advertisements in English and Spanish, including emergency advertisements when heavy rainfall is expected; an annual [Flood Safety Poster Contest](#); Flood Safety Awareness Week; digital resources and tools through [ATXFloodSafety.com](#), along with numerous public outreach and engagement events throughout the year.

- [ATXFloodSafety.com](#) is a website external from the City of Austin that houses links to multiple flood preparedness resources to help property owners understand their flood risk and prepare themselves and their families before a flood occurs. These links connect users with the following resources:
 - Information about the National Weather Service's [Atlas 14](#) study to help residents understand their flood risk and changing floodplains.
 - [ATXfloods.com](#) to show real-time road closures due to flooding. Residents are encouraged to visit this website *before* they get on the road. Information about this tool is also included in emergency advertising and in the advertising campaigns for flood safety. Note that when it is flooding or when flooding is imminent, we will direct people the ATXfloods.com rather than ATXfloodsafety.com

- [FloodPro](#) to allow property owners to find where their property is located within a floodplain.
- [WarnCentralTexas.org](#) to allow residents to sign up for emergency alerts via text, email or phone.
- FEMA flood insurance information to help residents learn about flood insurance and why it's important.
- The LCRA's [Hydromet](#) to show near-real-time data on streamflow, river stage, rainfall totals, temperature and humidity.
- [Ready.gov](#) to help residents create a disaster preparedness plan.
- [Floodplain Development Information](#) page to provide information about floodplain regulations.
- WPD's [Flood Safety Information](#) page related to the Turn Around Don't Drown campaign.

Brassiewood Local Flood Risk Reduction Project

The [Brassiewood Flood Risk Reduction Capital Improvement Project](#) will reduce the risk of flooding of homes, yards and streets through an upgraded storm drain system that includes detention pond improvements, upgraded storm drain pipe and new storm drain inlets. The short-term and long-term solutions to help with local flood issues in this area were developed with the help of input from GAVA and Brassiewood neighborhood residents.

Block Captain Program

HSEM is working with GAVA and the community to develop a system and training for block captains that are ready to assist neighbors during emergencies. This program will move the community toward building capacity to prepare, respond, and recover from emergencies. The Block Captain program will consist of a neighborhood emergency plan that includes communication, outline roles and responsibilities, and periodic practices to ensure success during emergencies.

Ready Central Texas Campaign

Staff attended several outreach events to provide information on resources, tools, and emergency preparedness. The four-step plan (*Make a Plan, Build a Kit, Know your Neighbors, and Stay Informed*) is shared and strongly encouraged. More information at [ReadyCentralTexas.org](#). The Ready Central Texas app is also being promoted through outreach events to encourage residents to register for Warn Central Texas. This is the local emergency alert system to receive alerts by text, email, or phone. More information can be found at [WarnCentralTexas.org](#). Basic emergency supplies and preparedness information are also distributed during events and trainings.

Additional Preparedness Training

In addition to the Climate Navigator training, a more hands-on preparedness training to help people in emergencies is in development by HSEM. This new component would be more advanced than the previous offering and would include Stop the Bleed, Hands-Only CPR, First Aid, and heat/winter weather awareness and tips. The course will be 2-4 hours in length.